03.02.02

Construction – **Residential**

Site supervision – practical guidance >

This information bulletin provides guidance to House Builders to determine the adequacy of the Occupational Health and Safety supervision they provide on their housing construction sites.

Builders must provide the degree of supervision necessary for work on their sites to be carried out safely and without risks to health. In order to comply with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act* 2007, the supervision provided by the builder must be effective, meaning that it is clearly delegated, competent and timely.

1. Scope

This bulletin applies to the construction, renovation or extension of:

- detached houses; and
- attached dwellings, separated from each other by a fire resisting wall, such as terrace, row or town houses; and
- ancillary buildings to the above, such as private garages, gazeboes and carports.

Note: The above are based on classes 1, 2 & 10 of the Building Code of Australia.

Multi-storey buildings (i.e. above 3 habitable storeys are not included in the scope of this bulletin).

2. Who needs site supervision?

- The builder's own workers
- The builder's contractors and their workers
- Visitors to site

3. What is meant by site supervision?

Site supervision means the general direction, coordination and oversight of the onsite work processes. In particular, occupational health and safety supervision on housing construction sites involves:

- deciding when particular contractors or phases of the construction process can commence, and when it is necessary to suspend a process;
- providing the necessary coordination and general instruction for work associated with one process so as not to endanger persons engaged in other processes;
- upon becoming aware of a dangerous work practice or situation, issuing prompt directions necessary to safeguard site personnel and/or the general public from harm; and
- monitoring the general conduct of work for compliance with the builder's and/or contractors' OH&S procedures and safe work method statements (if required).

The builder's contractors also have a duty to provide the necessary degree of supervision to their workers to enable them to perform their work in a manner that is safe and without risks to health.

NT WorkSafe is the administrative arm of the Work Health Authority and administers the *Workplace Health and Safety Act*, the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act*, the *Dangerous Goods (Road and Rail Transport) Act*, the *Dangerous Goods Act* and the *Radioactive Ores and Concentrates (Packaging and Transport) Act* and related Regulations on behalf of the Northern Territory Government.

4. What is clearly delegated supervision?

For supervision to be **effective,** the supervisor should have the clearly delegated authority of the builder to:

- make prompt decisions on behalf of the builder;
- issue directions on matters that could adversely affect the health or safety of on-site personnel or the general public; and
- in all other respects, act on the builder's behalf in discharging the builder's onsite OH&S responsibilities.

5. What is competent supervision?

Supervision is **competent** when the supervisor has:

- a general knowledge of the OH&S rights and responsibilities of the builder, and of those engaged on site, or providing goods or services to the site;
- a general understanding of the construction sequences, processes and work practices associated with the type of construction being undertaken at the site; and
- a general awareness of the hazards and risks associated with the types of materials, chemicals, plant and equipment used at the site, and an understanding of the minimum controls necessary to safeguard site personnel and the general public from harm.

6. What is timely supervision?

Supervision is **timely** when:

- the supervisor monitors on-site work practices, processes and procedures; and
- delivery drivers, contractors and workers can seek and obtain the supervisor's direction in the event of uncertainty on what is required to safeguard health and safety.

Whilst the supervisor's physical presence on-site is the optimum way of ensuring timely supervision, full-time on-site supervision may not always be necessary.

Between site visits, supervisors can continue to exercise timely supervision by phone, fax, internet, and/or two-way radio communication.

If the usual supervisor knows they will be un-contactable for a short period, arrangements should be made with key site personnel to effectively delegate urgent decision-making responsibility pending the supervisor's return to availability.

7. Records of supervision

To avoid doubt, it is recommended that supervisors keep brief but clear records, such as:

- diary notes of site visits and verbal OH&S instructions, and
- copies of any written OH&S site directions issued.

8. Compliance with OH&S law

The advice provided in this Guidance Note is consistent with OH&S law in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, and with the National Standard for Construction Work.

NT WorkSafe >

GPO Box 1722
Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 1800 019 115
Facsimile: (08) 8999 5141
Email: ntworksafe@nt.gov.au
Website: www.worksafe.nt.gov.au